

critical digest

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

Fall Drama Prospects

Bernardine by Mary Chase, produced by Irving Jacobs, directed by Guthrie McClintic...See the Jaguar by Richard Ayers, produced by Lemuel Ayers, with Anne Baxter, and Arthur Kennedy...The Little Hut, London current hit by Andre Roussin with Robert Morley and Joan Tetzel...The Deep Blue Sea by Terrance Rattigan, also current London hit, to star Margaret Sullivan, produced by Alfred de Liagre, Jr.

Digests of Current Reviews - more back page

Wish You Were Here-Imperial, 6/25/52. Leland Hayward and Joshua Logan musical version of Arthur Kober's play Having a Wonderful Time, opened after three weeks of highly publicized previews; three critics okayed proceedings as summer entertainment, while majority were disappointed. News, Eagle and Press critics were on the cheering side. Chapman, News, found it a smart, sentimental and beautiful musical with excellent songs. Sheaffer, Eagle, thought vitality of young stars kept show moving over the dull spots. Rest of the critics panned musical because it lacked simplicity of original. Atkinson, Times, wished everyone concerned had relaxed. Kerr, Herald Tribune, condemned it as too mechanical. Split decision voiced on Harold Rome's score, though all panned Kober book as lightweight. Jack Cassidy and Sheila Bond share acting honors, while most of the rest were termed "adequate." Several noted that swimming pool onstage looked inviting on warm opening evening.

Summer Theatre Productions

Berkshire Playhouse, Stockbridge, Mass, opening featured Ted Shawn in lead of Death Takes a Holiday, reports Rice, Post. Dancer's performance was acceptable, though the 1928 Alberta Casella script seems talky and unconvincing today. Supporting cast and production praised...Mae West's current opus Come on Up...Ring Twice! viewed at Princeton, NY, McCarter Theatre by Hawkins, WT&S, is a collection of ancient jokes that sound riotous when Mae tells them. Sylvester, News, reported that first performance in Princeton was actually first run through rehearsal...First try-out of season, Count Your Blessings, a new comedy by Carl and Dorothy Allensworth, won approval of Ward, Variety, at Bucks County, Pa, Playhouse. Staged by Ezra Stone and featuring Albert Dekker, was tabbed natural from Broadway, a sort of "Oklahoma" without music.

Hits Revisited-Cast Changes

Eddie Dowling's portrayal of role originated in November by James Barton in Paint Your Wagon added three more daily reviewers to its critical bandwagon. Francis, Billboard, Dash, Women's Wear, and Pollock, Compass, agree that Dowling's softer playing of the prospector gives musical added charm. Billboard man still thinks show's axles creak, mostly due to slow-moving book...Trade paper reviewer and Compass critic also okayed Maggie McNamara's summer replacement of Barbara Bel Geddes in The Moon Is Blue.

News & Notes

Point of No Return takes five week vacation, returning August 4th...Celeste Holm who is subbing for Gertrude Lawrence in The King and I during the summer, joins cast July 1st...Johnny Coy replaces Bill Callahan, Top Banana...

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' Cumulative NYC Ratings '
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D - Daily W - Weekly M - Monthly B - Broadcast

DT - NY Times	DJC - Journal of Commerce	WCM - Chr. Science Monitor
DH - NY Herald Tribune	DWJ - Wall St. Journal	WC - Commonweal
DN - NY News	DWW - Women's Wear	WCU - Cue
DM - NY Mirror	WB - Billboard	WN - Nation
DC - NY Compass	WV - Variety	WNR - New Republic
DP - NY Post	WCD - Critical Digest	WNS - Newsweek
DJ - NY Journal American	WGN - George Jean Nathan	WNY - New Yorker
DW - NY World Tele-Sun	WWM - Ward Morehouse	WSR - Saturday Review
DB - Brooklyn Eagle	BC - WCBS Bill Leonard	WT - Time
DL - L.I.Press	BL - New Leader-WEVD	MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 19	Con: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY
		None: DWJ WN WNR WSR
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29	Con: WN
I AM A CAMERA-11/28/51	PROS: 22	Con: DN DJ WCM WNR WN So-So: DT
THE KING AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29	Con: WN
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 22	None: WGN WC WN MP
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26	Con: WCD WGN None: WN MP
MRS. McTHING-2/20/52	PROS: 20	Con: DM DJ BC DL WNR WT WGN
		None: WNR MP
NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52	PROS: 24	Con: DP WT WGN None: WN WNR MP
OF THREE I SING-5/5/52	PROS: 12	Con: DH DJ DL DWW WB WV WCD BC WC WCU WNY
		WSR WT
		None: WWM BL WCM WNR MP
PAINT YOUR WAGON-11/10/51	PROS: 21	Con: DH DP DJ WV WWM BC WC
		None: BL WNR WSR
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 28	Con: BL None: WNR
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/13/51	PROS: 25	Con: DW BL WN WNR WT
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29	Con: WT
TOP BANANA-11/1/51	PROS: 23	Con: DP DJ BL None: WCM WN WNR WSR

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' Off Broadway '
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Summer and Smoke will continue its successful run through the summer at Circle in the Square...Fortress of Glass will be presented for two weeks in September at Circle in the Square, after which Irwin Rose hopes to move it to the Hotel Edison Arena Theatre...Masque and Lyre Light Opera Company returned from three week vacation to start summer season, group launches nation-wide tour November 10th...September 29th picked as opening date of Frankie and Johnny at Theatre de Lys, total cost of renovation of former movie theatre will be \$50,000...American Lyric Theatre presents nine weeks of one act operas, ballets and plays in repertory at the Provincetown starting July 1st. Opening bill consists of Debussy's L'Enfant Prodigue, Menotti's The Old Maid and the Thief, and a new play by Edward Lawrence The Beautiful Mariposa. William Whiting and Robert Lerner are co-producers...New Playwrights casting for Wedding in Japan by Ted Pollock, due in July at Yugoslav American Hall...Living Theatre presenting Ubu the King, a burlesque by Alfred Jerry, at Cherry Lane starting July 16th...Punch Opera presents summer season at Metropolitan-Duane Auditorium, West 13th, starting July 1st with first American production of Ralph Vaughn Williams' Hugh the Drover.

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' Green Room Department '
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THEATRE FUTURE...Distinctive qualities of TV will not keep the playgoer from the living theatre, Tynan, London Evening Standard, told British Drama League Conference, "Stage" reports. In TV you never get waves of laughter or waves of sighs which can overcome you and cause you to forget yourself. The TV viewer tired of a continual programs of films on TV will want a change. And the change, the British critic suggested, will be to go to the theatre.

DRAMA PREDICTIONS...Paris hit La Cuisine des Anges has best chances of Broadway success, visiting Americans report to Watts, Post...If Tennessee Williams' short story "Three at a Summer Game," recently read at Circle in the Square by the author, grows into a play, it might be the best new American play in many seasons, bets Hewes, Saturday Review. Lack of theatre activity expected next season shows that "Fabulous Invalid" is having alarming sinking spells, moans Sobel, Journal American.

MAIL BOX...Blum, Theatre World, reminds that Laurette Taylor made a silent movie of Peg O' My Heart in 1928...Times reader poses fascinating question concerning idle moments of theatre musicians. Correspondent would like to hide musicians off stage and is sure they agree.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS..."Main Street to Broadway" film sponsored by Council of Living Theatre probably won't accomplish a thing, practically or artistically, in aiding theatre's problems, complains Watt, News...Wish You Were Here producers have gone through hell in a goldfish bowl, thanks to their in-town previews, points out Pollock, Compass...William Saroyan is in dire need of a collaborator, recommends Nathan, Journal American.

COLUMN TIPS...Mary Martin's next Broadway show may be musical version of Pygmalion, hints Eaton...Wish You Were Here producers traded punches during tryout period, reveals Winchell...Rodgers and Hart may revive Boys From Syracuse, whispers Walker...Five New Faces of 1952 cast members turned down film contracts, reports Gardner.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Union of unions sought by Ralph Bellamy, new president of Actors Equity, Hawkins, WT&S, discovered...Subway circuit making last stand at Flatbush is a dead institution because audiences can't spend a pleasant evening's diversion in the theatre, George Brandt told Rice, Post...Things you don't forget in theatre are the things that make you cry, Eddie Dowling, Paint Your Wagon, told Morehouse, WT&S, in picking Laurette Taylor as greatest actress he ever saw.

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' Theatre News Roundup '
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Shaw's Widower's Houses presented by Community Theatre at Greenwich Mews Playhouse...American Contemporary Theatre formed to present plays at President Theatre in fall starting September 29th with Pirandello's Henry IV, adapted and directed by John Reich Baxter...The Rivals continues week ends at Provincetown...Dramatists' Forum considered The Modern Home by Ray Yates, chairman of group which meets Thursdays at Amato Theatre...John Golden honored on 78th birthday at Sardi's...Lenore Lonergan returned to Of Thee I Sing...Wish You were Here previews earned \$100,000...Warren Caro, American Theatre Society, to visit ten cities for Council of Living Theatre-Theatre Guild promotions...ANTA financial report reveals \$300 net return on fund campaign, with \$35,000 loss on ANTA Play series...Catholic Actors Guild reelected Gene Buck president...International Federation of Actors formed in London, Jean Darcante named president...An entire evening of WNBC late hour "Music Through the Night" will be devoted to Richard Rodgers music in honor of the composer's 50th birthday.

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' Random Drama Notes '
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BOOKS---Clarence Derwent writing autobiography entitled "Alarums and Excursions" ...Eartha Kitt, New Faces of 1952, autobiography called "Characters I Have Met"...Tallulah Bankhead autobiography, ghosted by Richard Maney, to be published by Harper's in fall, title is "Tallulah"...John Gassner's third volume of "Best American Plays" praised by Sheaffer, Eagle; Pollock, Compass and Kass, WFUV...Laurence Irving's biography of grandfather "Henry Irving," Macmillan, recommended as fascinating reading for all who love theatre by Pollock, Compass.

FILMS---"New Faces of 1952" film may be produced in NY by Leonard Silman..."Venus Observed" film postponed...Twentieth-Century Fox casting "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" film...James Cassidy obtained film rights to all Ibsen's plays from grandson of playwright...Irving Berlin working on book for "There's No Business Like Show Business" film...Billy Wilder plans to do original film script for Yul Brynner...MGM Julius Caesar production to start in July signed John Gielgud, Marlon Brando, James Mason, Louis Calhern and Deborah Kerr...Kilgallen, Journal American, predicts Shakespeare film will be flop because most of public had fill of Bard in school.

RECORDS---Capitol, Columbia, MGM records all released albums featuring Jerome Kern music from Roberta, because of film version of musical entitled "Lovely to Look At"...Wish You Were Here albums by RCA scheduled to be on sale in lobby opening night...RCA also made original cast album of New Faces of 1952...Capitol recorded Of Thee I Sing album with current cast.

TV & RADIO---NBC TV Robert Montgomery's production of Marcia Davenport novel "Of Lena Geyer" viewed by prospective angels for Broadway production..."Paula Stone Show" switches from EMGM to Mutual...ABC TV Playwright's Theatre lost Celanese sponsor, but William Morris agency reports several clients interested...Variety okayed comments by Chapman, News, on NBC Radio "Best Plays" series heard Sundays at 8:30 PM...Robert E. Sherwood may write series of original plays for NBC TV...Richard Rodgers has completed half of his 13 hour long scores for NBC TV "Victory at Sea" due in September.

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' Late Reviews '
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A Night in Venice-Jones Beach Stadium 6/26/52. \$4 million dollar stadium, \$400,000 Mike Todd production, 400 performers and cool breezes impressed first night critics. "Romantic extravaganza" by Johann Strauss, with new lyrics and book by Ruth and Thomas Martin seemed pleasant enough to most. Top credits went to director Jack Donohue and dance director James Nygreen who spread their company over stage 1/8 mile wide with actors and singers on, under and in the lagoon 100 feet from the audience. Minor complaints voiced by several that lagoon put audience too far from performers, and loud speaker system made it difficult at times to know who is singing. Orchestra directed by Thomas Martin and large cast of singers rated excellent by all. Atkinson, Times, was impressed by it all, but pointed out that outdoor dramas around the country are put on in slightly less cost. Allison, Herald Tribune, marked book off as standard, but agreed that visual splendor, thanks to Raoul Pene Du Bois sets and costumes, was breath-taking. Chapman, News, who almost raved over production, noted that even Jones Beach moths are hams. Hawkins, WT&S, fully expected audience to be blown into air as second act curtain, so moved was he by first act fire work finale. Singing cast headed by Thomas Hayward, Nola Fairbanks, Michael Roberts, Norwood Smith, Jack Russell and Laurel Hurley. Sightlines were reported as perfect, so all 8000 seat holders can view the proceedings on all fronts. Show train leaves Penn Station nightly at 7 25 PM with special bus connections at Freeport. Round trip including show ticket sells for \$4.90.

